

## **Introduction: Philosophy as Translation and the Understanding of Other Cultures**

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### **Philosophy as translation, philosophy as mutual education**

The 15<sup>th</sup> Biennial Meeting of the International Network of Philosophers of Education was held from August 17 – 20, 2016, at the University of Warsaw. The conference theme was “Philosophy as Translation and the Understanding of Other Cultures,” and we take this as the title for this Special Issue of *Ethics and Education*. This conference embraced a variety of different subthemes: border crossing, immigrancy and home; global economies and global justice; translation, untranslatability and the (mis)understanding of other cultures; the internationalization of higher education; policy borrowing and transfer; cosmopolitanism, patriotism, and global citizenship; crossing philosophical divides; and changing identities, personal and cultural. The Programme

Committee (Naoko Saito as Programme Chair, Naomi Hodgson as Assistant to the Programme Chair, Andrea English, Rafał Godoń , Megan Laverty, Ian Munday, Claudia Ruitenberg, Judith Suissa, and Joris Vlieghe) worked in collaboration with the Site Committee chaired by Rafał Godoń of the University of Warsaw. The programme that was produced comprised a diversity of papers on topics related to the conference theme, with speakers from twenty-seven different countries. We were delighted to have keynote presentations by Morwenna Griffiths (UK), Kai Horsthemke (South Africa), and Roger Ames (USA), and these are included in this volume.

A distinctive feature of this year's conference was the way that people from different cultures and with multiple linguistic backgrounds could not only exchange academic ideas but also themselves experience a process of mutual transformation through crossing borders: each session was given a shared title under which speakers with similar interests were paired.<sup>1</sup> Through this, the conference succeeded in creating an atmosphere of mutual enlightenment and friendship, and in facilitating dialogue between the speakers and with the audience; a forum was created for dialogue among people with similar interests but from different backgrounds. The articles included in

this Special Issue are representative of this dynamism, reflecting a diversity of initiatives and interventions, in what might be thought of as a process of *mutual education* among all the participants. This, we believe, is the product of the experience of translation: translation as a linguistic experience inseparable from human transformation, which involves the crossing of borders.

As the articles included here demonstrate, the processes of translation featured in the conference and in this collection cannot be limited to linguistic translation as conventionally understood. Translation is rather to be taken as a “metonym of the movement of meaning within language more generally” (Standish and Saito 2017). This means that translation is a window through which to understand how we, as linguistic beings, are constantly in a process of transformation, through which we are mutually affected, and hence, how the supposed identities of ourselves and our cultures are also already involved in processes of translation. The nature of translation in this respect is at the same time inseparable from the idea of education as human transformation, as mentioned above. Some of the discussion in the conference touched upon the difficulty of translation – of translation as a challenging experience. Such difficulties can manifest

themselves as encounters with the untranslatable and with an unbridgeable gap, as the difficulty of crossing borders, as the threat of exclusion, in the form of despair at not being at home, and as a displacement of the self as the “cost” of transformation. The existential crises involved in translation are part of our political life – especially in times when the closing of borders symbolized by Brexit and the triumph of Donald Trump presents new challenges to those living lives of immigrancy or who are waiting at the borders. How to resist emotive tide of populism and, in particular, the language that legitimates exclusion? How to confront the anxieties of inclusion? These are challenges that are increasingly pressing.

Faced with these real difficulties today, what could the understanding of other cultures mean? Articles included in this Special Issue respond to this challenge from different angles and approaches. The way they intersect and diverge itself embodies the processes and the product of translation played out in the conference.

*Special panels: “Philosophy as translation and the understanding of other cultures: For mid-career and young researchers”*

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A further experiment in this year's programme was the inclusion of special panels for selected young and mid-career researchers, designed by the Programme Chair to facilitate the exchange of ideas on philosophy as translation and the understanding of other cultures. Space prevents us from acknowledging all the individuals who contributed in this respect, but we would like to thank those who participated in the mid-career researchers' panel – Doret de Ruyter (Holland), Simone Galea (Malta), Rafał Godoń (Poland), Cristiane Maria Gottschalk (Brazil), and Yasushi Maruyama (Japan). Their panel focused on the experience of translation in the context of the globalization of higher education and particularly its implications for teaching in multicultural and multilingual contexts. Some political and ethical aspects of translation with respect to the development of philosophy of education and especially in relation to research and the teaching of young researchers were the major concern of the group. One of the issues they discussed was the problem of the dominance of English language within a globalized world and how it can become a medium of colonization. This reflects and reproduces an injustice related to access that draws on the prevalence of the use of English for learning in a globalized world. Against this background they emphasized the

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significance of INPE in the following terms:

Philosophy of education has a long historical tradition. Characteristically, philosophers of education worked within their own language, which meant that language boundaries and concomitant paradigms were hardly ever crossed. In the past decades this has changed substantially. Particularly due to translation of the work of philosophers (of education), the interchange between US and UK traditions on the one hand and European traditions on the other hand increased. The International Network of Philosophy of Education and its biennial conference has yet again opened up spaces for international philosophers, particularly Asian, Latin-American and African, to bring in their ways of thinking and contribute to inquiry in philosophy of education through their own research and that of their students.

The young researcher's panel – which comprised Kensuke Asai (Japan),

Hanna-Maija Huhtala (Finland), Antonia Sochaczewska (Poland), Joris Vlieghe (UK), SunInn Yun (Korea), and Zhu Ye (Japan) – also created an occasion for reflection with the audience not only upon the implications of philosophy as translation for education, but also upon the significance of taking up this topic at a conference dedicated to philosophizing about *education* instead of at a conference within mainstream *philosophy*. Their discussion moved through the existential sense of the loss of home in translation, to translation as internal to the nature of language, which brings with it a sense of the ungraspable and hence drives us to mutual understanding and the pursuit of perfection, and to the role of the idea of translation in higher education and in the research community. Asai comments in retrospect: “What was most interesting to me was the discussion on the paradoxical relation between the possibilities and costs of translation. While in their presentations most panelists seemed to share a positive view to the effect that translation is the condition of education, in the discussion the complicated differences between the panelists come to the fore. Some showed sympathy to the idea - an idea from the floor - that translation and transformation impose a certain cost since we are not what we were once we enter another language; others regarded

this lament for the loss as nothing other than a mystification of the original.” Yun, who talked about her own sense of loss of home through translation, remarks: “Philosophy as translation can help us see the experience that philosophy of education should capture as an educational experience. By this, philosophy of education should overcome the dichotomy of subject and object, inner and outer, and home and foreign divisions in language. Translation is an educational experience insofar as it involves the experience of the sense of the new, the sense of originality, and the sense of moving on in language.”

The conference theme is addressed in three very different registers by the keynote addresses published here. Roger Ames considers not only linguistic but also philosophical translation between east and west, calling for a ‘nuanced familiarity’ (this volume, ##) with particular terms in order that we can understand texts in their own terms, and avoid the Anglicizing or Christianizing that has historically taken place in the Western translation of Eastern philosophy. Taking a different approach again, Kai Horsthemke’s epistemological enquiry in to the German notion *Barrierefreiheit* - a central term in the German inclusion movement that denotes not only absence of



barriers but also freedom from barriers - addresses the conference sub-theme of border crossing. By asking what inclusive and barrier-free education might be, he challenges some of the strongly-held epistemological barriers themselves that structure academic and public debates on disability. The dialogue is continued by the inclusion of two response papers by Naoko Saito and Rafał Godoń to Ames' and Horsthemke's articles, respectively.

In contrast to the academic style of Ames' ontological discussion and Horsthemke's epistemological inquiry, Morwenna Griffiths' contribution, written with Rosa Murray, offers a more reflective account of our current educational context. Given the current challenges referred to in this introduction, the articles in this volume, and the workshops convened at the conference, it is clear that we face new questions as educators and researchers of how and what to teach, of what is of value to pass on to the next generation, and how to go about making sense of our present today. Griffiths and Murray seek to address this in relation to taking and passing on responsibility for sustainability and global justice in a post-human world.

Along with the keynote and response papers, other contributions to this

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special issue are selected from those presented at the conference. Marina Schwimmer's paper, "Beyond Theory and Practice: Towards an Ethics of Translation," was presented in the session, "Translation, untranslatability, and the (mis)understanding of other cultures"; Chien-Ya Sun's, "Translating Desire (and Frustration)," in the session, "Changing identities, personal and cultural"; David Lewin's, "The Hermeneutics of Religious Understanding in a Postsecular Age," in the session, "Encountering the self and the other"; Marc Silverman's, "The 'Religion of the Child': Korczak's Road to Radical Humanism," and Renate Schepen's, "Intercultural Philosophy and Education in a Global Society: Philosophical Divides are Dotted Lines," in the session, "Crossing philosophical divides"; Amanda Fulford's, "Refusal and Disowning Knowledge: Re-Thinking Disengagement in Higher Education," in the session, "The internationalization of higher education"; and Chris Martin's, "Is Moral Philosophy an Educationally Worthwhile Activity? Toward a Liberal Democratic Theory of Teacher Education," in the session, "School teaching and pedagogy." We hope the mutual resonances of these articles will create a forum for further dialogue on philosophy as translation and the understanding of other cultures.

## Reference

Standish, P. and Saito, N (eds). 2017. *Stanley Cavell and Philosophy as Translation:*

*Truth is translated* (Rowman & Littlefield, in press).

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<sup>1</sup> The full programme can be downloaded [here](#).